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**With Child and Unmarried, “Choice” during the 1950s and 1960s: Shotgun Weddings, Homes for Unwed Mothers, and Back-Alley Abortions**

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One of the most abiding notions to come out of the postwar period has been that of “family togetherness.” First used in *McCall’s* in 1954, from its inception, its usage has granted the family a quasi-sacred status. The family was seen as the site where the individual achieved their greatest satisfaction and reached their true potential as their endeavors were placed within a larger communal context that imbued them with greater social and spiritual meaning. This concept was meant to bolster the nuclear family model, which became the norm in the aftermath of World War II. The nuclear family took on major social and cultural significance as it was depicted as the ultimate bastion of American society. It was within the family and home that the fear of nuclear annihilation and the encroachment of Communism were kept at bay. The family was seen as *the* stabilizing unit in an increasingly insecure world; therefore, anything that might threaten it was seen to be undermining the very fabric of society. Sexual relations outside of marriage were identified as such a menace. One way in which this “problem” manifested itself was through premarital sex. Many young adults and teenagers were pushing the limits of acceptable sexual behavior by “parking,” “necking,” “petting,” and, for some, even “going all the way.”<sup>1</sup> These sexual behaviors were challenging to the nuclear family norm and the image of

family togetherness precisely because they did not provide the security and stability that marriage did in the event of pregnancy. Additionally, they were clear transgressions of the strict gendered and sexual norms in place at that time that dictated that young women save themselves for marriage—maintaining their purity and innocence, which they would then share with their husband’s on their wedding nights. Premarital sex was thus highly frowned upon. Despite the social pressure to restrain oneself, sexual activity seems to have played a rather large role in the lives of many teens and young adults during this era, more than was ever acknowledged in political and popular discourse at the time.

In conducting oral history interviews in Boise, Idaho and Portland, Oregon<sup>2 3</sup> in the United States during the summers of 2012 and 2013, I noticed that several of my interview subjects alluded to the “options” available to women if they found themselves pregnant outside of wedlock. They referred to shotgun weddings, “serious illness” that required a young woman “to go away” for a time, and “taking care of it.” Many of my interviewees stated the general belief that by the late 1960s premarital sex had become ubiquitous, which might lead one to conclude that it had lost much of its stigmatization, and yet other oral history accounts convey the idea that there was a persisting taint when a sexual norm was transgressed. Drawing from the oral histories that I conducted, as well as works that have collected accounts on abortion and adoption—Patricia Miller’s *The Worst of Times*, Ellen Messer’s and Kathryn May’s *Back Rooms*, and Ann Fessler’s *The Girls Who Went Away*<sup>4</sup>—, this paper will discuss the breach that sexual relations posed to postwar American society, the options young women had if they found themselves pregnant before marriage, and the pressures they encountered in trying to assert their choices. This analysis will circle back to the nuclear family norm and the ways in which it was able to reassert itself. The weight of this convention was such that an unmarried young woman could find a way to obtain the archetypical marriage and family no matter her transgression.

### *“Nice Girls” and “Bad Girls”: The Incidence of Premarital Sex*

Opportunity was probably one of the largest contributors to the rise in premarital sex among young men and women at mid-twentieth-century. Dating norms had moved away from the courting rituals that dictated past male-female interactions, most notably in terms of privacy and location. Courtship usually began and ended in the intimacy of the young woman's home, under the direct supervision of a relative. Dating, however, moved the young couple out of the home, into the modern world of entertainment, and out from under the prying eyes of chaperones. This change in location afforded the dating couple much more seclusion than it had previously known. As early as 1948 and 1953 respectively, the Kinsey reports revealed that amongst men “[...] heterosexual petting was nearly universal [and] that almost ninety percent had engaged in premarital intercourse [...]” while for women “[...] nearly ninety percent had engaged in petting and half in premarital intercourse [...]” (D’Emilio and Freedman, 1988: 286). These numbers held steady throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and began to climb in the mid-1970s, with slightly higher levels of sexual activity amongst the African American population throughout this period (Hofferth, Kahn, and Baldwin, 1987: 46). Kinsey’s research revealed that American postwar society seemed to be experiencing a sexual awakening. Despite a clear shift in premarital sexual behavior, public attitudes tended to be divided on the acceptability of teenage sexuality. “Mass-circulation magazines and professional journals [revealed that...] significant and relevant portions of the U.S. population, in the mid-to-late 1960s, still strongly disapproved of premarital sex” (Bailey, 1999: 119). And yet, younger people in the mid-to-late 1960s affirmed changing behavioral patterns, “In 1969 [...]a] Gallup Poll showed that a historically high 55 percent of college females did not think premarital sex was wrong” (Heidenry, 1997: 67).

With these conflicting behaviors and attitudes in mind, it is not surprising that the data that I collected seem to corroborate a divide in people's acceptance of sexual activity before marriage. The majority of the twenty-four people I interviewed did not refer to sex before marriage and when specifically asked, several of them maintained that premarital sexual activity "was just not something you did." Yet seven of my interviewees addressed the incidence of premarital sex and interestingly enough the majority of them were amongst the older respondents. They were young adults during the 1950s and 1960s, the majority of them being born in the 1930s (two) and 1940s (four), while the seventh was born in the 1950s. This is quite revealing because it demonstrates that this "older generation" was indeed aware of changing dating norms that involved sexual activity and the consequences of these changes, especially the attached stigma if one's private choice became public knowledge. Furthermore, all seven of these interviewees acknowledged a gap between private behavior and public attitudes, which supports the idea that the norm was in the process of being rewritten.

Prior to the War, when a young woman found herself in "a family way," social theorists and psychologists postulated that this was a result of abnormality, of deviance, and of an "unusual social environment" (Butts and Sporkowski, 1974: 110). Postwar researchers, in response to the high incidence of premarital pregnancy, attempted to disseminate the idea that the only exceptional quality about the never-married-pregnant girl was precisely that she was pregnant (*idem.*), still many believed that the young woman was lacking in moral fortitude (Fessler, 2006: 36). When speaking about sexuality during this era, people commonly refer to "nice girls" and "bad girls" and the implication is that one understands that these labels refer to a young woman's sexual promiscuity. A "nice girl" was someone who followed the gender and sexual norms of her time: morally, she was intact, remaining a virgin until marriage; physically, she was responsible, refusing any sexual advance that might get her

into trouble; and socially, she was becoming a “good woman,” learning the traits of wifehood and motherhood. While a “bad girl” was a young woman who rebelled against or transgressed gender and sexual norms, most notably, violating codes around sexual activity by having sex outside of wedlock, having multiple sexual partners, and/or finding herself “with child.” Many of my interviewees employed this terminology, but one in particular used it in a way that demonstrates its import when she said, “I remember a couple of girls in my senior class who became pregnant and we all thought they were bad girls. It just wasn’t done” (Linda, 2013)<sup>5</sup>. Many of the women presented in Anne Fessler’s *The Girls Who Went Away* and Patricia Miller’s *The Worst of Times* discuss the power of these labels and what type of behavior was permitted, or not, through the dictates of social stigmatization. Several women talked about how sex was out-of-bounds for “nice girls” (e.g. Miriam and Kate as qtd. in Miller, 1993: 65, 242-43); one woman—after having had an illegal abortion that required medical attention—hoped to escape the shame of admitting to the abortion, but was tested for venereal disease, an experience she identified as equally unbecoming of the “nice girl” (Marie as qtd. in Miller, 1993: 154); another said that “nice girls” simply did not get pregnant (Cathy II as qtd. in Fessler, 2006: 10); while another said that speaking about birth control was something that “nice girls” did not do (Carole I as qtd. in Fessler, 2006: 29). The mere idea of being invested in one’s reproductive health was considered beyond the pale for the “nice girl,” which would have placed even greater shame on any young woman who had to deal with any of the potential results of sexual intercourse, like sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy. What seems to become clear about the “nice girl” archetype, from these descriptions, is that it could only be preserved if a young woman maintained complete innocence of her sexuality and body, whether that manifested itself as ignorance of the sexual act or obliviousness of how to prevent pregnancy. Moreover, if it were revealed that a young woman was pregnant, her peers as well as her elders would shun her. These social reactions

were frequently devastating for the young woman: her family worried about *their* reputation in the community, other young women would avoid her so as not be associated with or condoning her immorality, and many high schools and colleges required unwed pregnant women to withdraw or to be expelled (Fessler, 2006: 71-72). Ultimately, the social stigma attached to premarital sex and out-of-wedlock pregnancy resulted in a young woman and her family hoping that her secret would not be revealed and her “nice girl” status maintained.

The looming threat of being exposed as a “bad girl” did not necessarily prevent young women from going “all the way.” This is partially due to a unique development in dating norms around this time: steady dating, which entailed going out exclusively with one person. It frequently involved a ritual demonstration of commitment, usually in the form of a promise ring, and gave the couple the idea that their relationship was a sort of practice marriage that included some degree of sexual activity (May, 1988: 121; Bailey 1988: 49-51; D’Emilio and Freedman, 1988: 261; Fessler, 2006: 31). Once in a steady relationship, a young woman’s reputation was less likely to be scrutinized by her peers. Many of these oral histories reveal that these steady relationships were intimate and intense enough that if the worst happened, the couple would just get married, in essence bypassing the stigmatization of being labeled a “bad girl” by opting for the respectable title of “Mrs.”

### *Marriage*

The seemingly ideal solution to the predicament of premarital pregnancy at this time was marriage. “Until the early 1970s it was the norm in premarital sexual relations that the partners would marry in the event of pregnancy” (Akerlof, Yellen, and Katz, 1996: 278). In asking my interviewees about the incidence of marriage right out of high school, three of the seven who talked about premarital sex and pregnancy, associated marriage after high school with pregnancy. Mary said,

[...A] lot of kids started getting married right out of high school. Let's see, one I guess actually got married in high school. That was sort of determined by the pregnancy. [...] A lot got married right out of school. They had got jobs. They worked in the area. [...B]ut my, my closest friends got married, pretty much [at] 18, 19. [...] I can say of the people that I ran around, my very best friend [...] got pregnant right out of high school [...] I think kids were sexually active, I think people just didn't talk about it [...]. I can remember when my friend came to tell me when she was pregnant. I mean it was a very big deal. She was very upset" (2013).

In fact, Allan Parnell, Gray Swicegood, and Gillian Stevens claim that by the end of the 1950s, more than 50 percent of the women who conceived out of wedlock were married before the birth of the child (1994: 263)<sup>6</sup>. This type of arrangement was frequently referred to as a "shotgun marriage" or "shotgun wedding," and its usage tends to connote two elements about the marriage: first, that it is a solution to the problem of pregnancy and, second, that it has to take place rather quickly to avoid the revelation that the young woman was pregnant before her wedding night. In fact, ethnographic studies conducted during the 1960s that broached the subject of "shotgun marriages" frequently found that the length of time a couple spent together before was relatively short and it usually involved sexual activity. If pregnancy was a result of those sexual encounters, the man felt it was his responsibility to marry the woman (Akerlof, Yellen, and Katz, 1996: 279). The social pressure to preserve the appearance of decency for both the young man and the young woman was very powerful. The fact that the median age at first marriage for women remained below 21 until 1972 could be explained by high frequencies of premarital sex, a general unawareness of birth control methods, and a social pressure to make the woman "respectable" in the event of pregnancy (Fessler, 2006: 67).

It is unclear to what point men and women felt they were given any degree of choice in this matter, partially because of the immense social pressure

to take this option. The quantitative data that can be gleaned from vital statistics leaves a lot to conjecture, whether we look at the marriage or the divorce rates. Additionally, the very usage of the term “shotgun marriage” designates a degree of coercion in the arrangement, because it is a motivated act and there is a desire to keep this reason from becoming public knowledge, in essence, casting doubt on any genuine desire for marriage by the bride and groom. To my knowledge, there is no substantial descriptive explanation on whether or not men and women felt they had any alternatives or how these men and women fared in making this choice<sup>7</sup>. From the oral histories available on adoption, it seems that marriage might have seemed like the natural next step for some of these young women. Further fieldwork could add valuable insights into the interplay of the social norm and its violation and whether marriage was seen as a happy result or a means to hide a moral failing.

Despite the fact that the normative social response to pregnancy outside of wedlock tended to be marriage, some women who wanted to marry and even some who were planning their weddings were told by their families that marriage was not a possibility.

### *Adoption*

Of the potential options available, relinquishment was fairly common in the 1960s: unmarried white women gave their babies up 40 percent of the time, while unmarried African American women only did 1.5 percent of the time (Fessler, 2006: 100). This difference may be accounted for in part with the higher frequency of informal adoptions amongst African Americans (Stolley, 1993: 29). Perhaps because of the sheer amount of relinquishments among the unmarried, the image of the girl “going away” marked many people who grew up during this era. When asking one of my older interviewees about the acceptability of sexual activity while he was in high school he said, “I know that it was certainly easier and more socially acceptable to be [...] sexually active by the time my kids



were in high school. [...] If a girl [...] got pregnant in high school, first place we probably wouldn't know about it [be]cause she'd have 'gone to visit her aunt,' or something, and would of course, not come back with the baby" (James, 2013).

The issue of choice does not seem to be quite as speculative when it comes to adoption. The ability to choose varied greatly from woman to woman in the accounts I found. Some felt they had no options because they were told to give the baby up for adoption by their parents, by their community leaders, by their social workers, and by those running the homes for unwed mothers where they stayed. This group of women seemed to have had the most positive vision of marriage and expected to marry when they found out they were with child but were forbidden or prevented from doing so. As a result, these women frequently felt powerless and were completely unaware that they had any legal rights. They tended to portray their experiences as shameful and as a moment in their life that permanently changed them. They were regularly told that going away and then giving up the child were the only means by which they could avoid a lifetime of shame for themselves and their children (Fessler, 2006: 9). Still other women seemed slightly more aware that there was an alternative to both marriage and adoption, making choice a larger factor in their decisions. These women opted to give their children up for adoption by comparing it to abortion. They settled on adoption largely for two different reasons: abortion was either too dangerous or morally reprehensible. They believed that the risks of abortion far-outweighed the benefits (*e.g.* Dee as qtd. in Messer and May, 1988: 32), while others could not even conceive of going through with an abortion, usually for religious or moral reasons (*e.g.* Carole II and Claudia as qtd. in Fessler, 2006: 108, 56).

The research on adoption and relinquishment seems to conclude that a certain type of woman was more likely to give her child up for adoption than another. First, she tended to be from a higher socioeconomic background. Second, she possessed greater educational aspirations. And third she had parents that were "supportive of the placement decision" (Fessler, 2006: 102; Stolley,

1993: 32; Bachrach, Stolley, London, 1992: 28). Though not corroborated to the same point, some studies indicate that women who gave their children up were more likely to regularly attend church (Bachrach, Stolley, London, 1992: 29). In further nuancing this profile, some studies have concluded that these women came from less cohesive families who showed less support of the woman during her pregnancy, and were likely to have had a sister who had also placed a child for adoption (*idem*). At first glance, these are seemingly contradictory characteristics. The first four criteria indicate that the typical birth mother came from a seemingly wholesome family environment, while the latter three imply a less “desirable” one. However, it is important to point out that all of these phenomena could occur simultaneously and could be indicators that the young woman’s parents, family, and/or community leaders engaged to some degree in coercion in order to ensure that this would be the option she “chose.” Many of the oral histories from which I have drawn demonstrate that these young women came from the middle and upper-middle classes, expected to attend university or were already at university, and that they regularly attended church. Most of these young women also had parents who were “supportive of the placement decision.” Despite its positive phrasing, this could also mean that these parents were against their daughters keeping the baby in any form, which would denote a lack of family unity and “less support of the woman during her pregnancy.” From the oral histories that I have come across, it seems necessary to really read between the lines when it comes to adoption and whether or not a young woman felt supported or coerced in making her decision. In any case, her background may have been one of the largest contributing factors in setting her on this path.

Marriage and adoption were not the only options available to women, though they did tend to be the most accessible. There was a third alternative, abortion, yet for most women, seeking one out was difficult, costly, potentially life threatening, not to mention illegal.

## *Abortion*

It is quite difficult to estimate the number of abortions performed in the United States before the passage of *Roe v. Wade* and its legalization in 1973, though many have conducted studies and tried to draw conclusions. In 1955, Alfred Kinsey believed that one in four women in the United States had had an abortion before the age of 45 (Miller, 1993: 1). Also at a national conference in 1955, Planned Parenthood concluded that anywhere from 200,000 to 1,200,000 illegal abortions were performed every year. They were drawing their numbers from hospital admissions that indicated post-abortion complications (*ibid.*: 322; Cates and RoCHAT, 1976: 92). Many of the physicians and health-care professionals in attendance believed that the upper part of the scale was probably the best reflection of reality (Miller, 1993: 1). Today, these numbers are believed to be fairly accurate as the annual average for abortion since its legalization has been around 1,000,000 (*idem*).

One significant difference I came across in the accounts of the women who had had abortions compared to those who had given their child up was that the vast majority felt that abortion was a choice. Albeit many of them seemed to express this as the only possibility available to them, they tended to frame it as a choice. In Miller's *The Worst of Times* and Messer and May's *Back Rooms*, many of the women saw abortion as the only "life-affirming choice" available to them, as Messer and May put it. This was the only way by which they could continue their educations, they could control the amount of children they had, they could avoid abject poverty, and so on. It remains to be verified whether abortion could be qualified as "life-affirming" by these women, or if has become a tendency amongst pro-choice advocates in more recent decades to view it as such. It seems more prudent to talk about these choices as a way out of what these women considered impossible situations, especially as a few of them expressed regret at having had an abortion, while others said this act was one of desperation, and nearly all of these women put their lives in jeopardy because very few of them

were able to obtain legal, safe abortions. Only one of the women I interviewed spoke about actually having had an illegal abortion. She did not talk about the experience, but rather the devastation that it left in its wake: leaving her infertile and forcing her and her husband later in life to adopt (Patricia, 2012). She was unable to refer to this experience and its effects without becoming emotional, which has reinforced my belief that in most circumstances this “choice” was a difficult one to make and that the women, who chose it, weighed it in conjunction with the rest of their lives, which often left them feeling as though it was the only option they had.

Access to abortion was a particularly important question when it came to one’s racial and socioeconomic background. One African American woman believed that it was much easier for black women to get an abortion because whomever performed abortions lived in the black community (Estelle as qtd. in Miller, 1993: 82), while another African American woman felt that precisely because the abortionists lived in her community, she had access to first-hand knowledge that made her acutely aware of how unsafe abortions were, thus preventing her from seeking one out (Lila as qtd. in Messer and May, 1988: 23). The consensus seems to be that the biggest barrier to obtaining an abortion, legal or illegal, was class. Many doctors in *The Worst of Times* substantiate this, saying that in their own communities, in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and Denver, the women they saw suffering in the septic wards in the hospitals—where women with abortion complications were placed—were often from poor communities and from ethno-racial minorities. In fact, the biggest advantage for any woman during this time to obtain a safe abortion seems to be whether or not she belonged to the middle or upper-middle class. Women from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tended to be able to use their personal and/or health networks in such a way that they were placed in the care of trained professionals.

Though getting married, going away, or getting a backstreet abortion in order to hide an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy were clear transgressions of

the sexual norm—sexual intimacy was to be expressed between a husband and wife only—each of these choices in their own way, helped to reinforce the importance of the nuclear family.

### *Transgressions Reappropriated into the Social Norm*

Steady dating, as previously noted, was commonly perceived as a preparatory step for marriage. This can be seen even as late as 1972—after the sexual revolution of the 1960s and after years of active feminist militancy—in terms of sexual practice and perception of what sex meant to the couple. At that time the rate for premarital sex had climbed all the way up to 73 percent for both men and women, showing that it had become more acceptable. Still, the majority of these sexually active heterosexual women only had one partner and believed he would eventually become their husband (Heidenry, 1997: 245). As such, it appears that despite the societal taboo surrounding premarital sex, young people during the postwar era saw sexual activity as a way to begin practicing for their married lives. Elaine Tyler May explains in her book *Homeward Bound* that “an eroticized marriage” was an integral part of the marriage’s strength and was meant to “enhance the home,” and bring each partner a sense of “happiness and well-being” (1998: 127)<sup>8</sup>. It seems appropriate then that so many young couples who found themselves unexpectedly expecting would decide that marriage was the right option for them. Because, as one woman put it in *Back Rooms*, they had been “playing” at being married (Lila as qtd. in Messer and May, 1988: 19) and marriage was what most people expected would result from their coupling. The choices of adoption and abortion do seem to run more in the face of the nuclear family norm than teenage marriage, but it is important to see how each of these choices allowed women the opportunity to eventually conform. For many of the young women who were sent away or who went away to give their babies up for adoption, they were told that this choice would allow them to move on with their lives, meet the right man, and have other children when they were in the “right”

context (e.g. Annie, Joyce I as qtd. in Fessler, 2006: 25, 133, 148). Though the out-of-wedlock birth was portrayed in these contexts as a *transgression*, relinquishment was meant to allow these young women the opportunity at *redemption*, to eventually have the ideal nuclear family in the ideal conditions. Despite the fact that many of the women who relayed their abortion stories in *Back Rooms* and *The Worst of Times* convey abortion as a desperate choice, for the women who did not have children or were not married, they looked at this as an opportunity to choose when they would participate in the norm, deciding for themselves what the “right” context was. For the unmarried and childless, many of them saw marriage as a trap, a hurdle to their education, or an impediment to their careers – this is particularly significant given the context of the time when a woman’s role was defined primarily in terms of domesticity – and so chose abortion in order to have the choice about when, why, and if they married (e.g. Kathleen and Lila as qtd. Messer and May, 1988: 11, 19-20). More than anything else, being married and having children were the social norm. Providing a means for young women who had gone astray to come back into the fold demonstrates how social mores use transgressions to provide counterexamples that keep many in line and to reassert themselves as the way things are.

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## NOTES

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1 Specific vocabulary developed in connection to youth sexual practices and became ubiquitous in popular culture during this era. "Parking" refers to the location in which

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many young people found themselves in order to have privacy and engage in sexual acts: the car. The young couple would find an isolated area where they could park the car to be alone. The terms “necking” and “petting” were a result of a more developed vocabulary taken to describe sexual interactions that preserved some of the moral codes that dictated that one did not engage in sexual intercourse. Necking consisted in caressing and kissing the neck or around the neck, while petting implied caressing and kissing below the neck. The former implies a focus around the head of the two parties, while the latter could go all the way up to intercourse (Bailey, 1988: 80-81, 87).

2 In doing research for my doctoral dissertation, I decided to focus on Boise, Idaho and Portland, Oregon because the Pacific Northwest has very little socio-cultural history to speak of. Part of my interest as a researcher is to analyze minor and major historical events away from the larger centers of activity in order to gain insight into national and local narratives that provide complimentary and contrasting visions of the larger history of the United States. Additionally, Boise and Portland, though both part of the Pacific Northwest region, can be taken as examples of the liberal-conservative divide that persists between the United States’ coasts and its interior. I am interested in looking at how both these cities evolved in the wake of World War II in order to observe what it is that drew people from different political backgrounds and leanings to these respective cities. The growth and urbanization that occurred in each of these places has created more distinctive environments between Portland and Boise, and yet, within these cities there seems to be a stronger homogeneous identity.

3 It is important to note that of the 21 interviews I conducted with 24 participants, most of the people I interviewed in Boise and all of the people in Portland were white. The white populations in both states and cities were by far the majority between 1950 and 1970. The 1950 Census reported Portland’s racial demographic make-up as 97.7% white (90.2% of whom were classified as Native white and 7.54% as Foreign-born white), 1.55% black, and .72% other races (U.S. Census Bureau, 1952b: 51), while Boise’s was 99.1% white (95.5% of the city’s population were Native-born Americans while 3.7% were of foreign-birth), .5% black, and .4% other races (US Census Bureau, 1952a: 42). Portland showed slight shifts in its racial composition between 1950 and 1960. 97% of the cities inhabitants were white, while 2% were black, and 1% were of other races. Boise shifted slightly in the other direction with its population being 99.26% white, .26% black, and .48% other races. This can be attributed in part to the annexation of suburban populations, rather than outmigration, as non-white racial groups do show an increase in numbers between 1950 (290 persons) and 1960 (665 persons) (US Census Bureau, 1952a: 42; US Census Bureau, 1971b: 5-6, 9). Data from the 1970 Census demonstrates a continued demographic racial shift in Portland as its population redistributed to 96% white, 2.3% black, and 1.5% other races (US Census Bureau, 1971c: 9). Boise joined in the national trend for urban racial diversification, ever so slightly, as its racial demographics became 98.97% white, .27% black, and .76% other races (US Census Bureau, 1971b: 9). As can be seen from this data both cities had heavily concentrated white populations, especially for metropolitan centers, but this seems to be relatively consistent with the Western region, which averaged a 93% white presence in its metropolitan areas for the 1970 Census (US Census, 1971a: 11). Though my interviewees are not representative of America’s racial diversity, some of them would have been considered ethnic whites (seven self-identified as belonging to Jewish families, one of whom came from a mixed

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ethnic-white family [Italian-Jewish], two said they were part of a Czech community while growing up, and one came from an Irish-Catholic family) and one of them was half Native American. Boise and Portland remain rather homogenous racially (whites represented 89% and 76% of these cities respective populations in 2010 [US Census Bureau, 2015]), but this should not be a reason to exclude race and ethnicity from any discussion on either place; it might however have to be recalibrated to focus more on the importance of ethnicity, descent, and religion. I have tried in this paper to discuss race when the data available lent itself to this sort of analysis.

4 Miller's work focuses exclusively on illegal abortion stories, while Fessler's concentrates uniquely on relinquishment stories, and Messer and May's explores both.

5 All of my interviewees are identified by pseudonyms.

6 They explain though that proportionately, white and black women were not marrying at the same rates: two-thirds of white women and one-quarter of black women married before the birth of the child (Parnell, Swicegood, and Stevens, 1994: 269). While Philips Cutright says that if we look at the increase in the proportion of young women marrying through time, we see a rise in the association of marriage and pregnancy, for both white and black women. Cutright shows that in 1940, pregnant white brides represented 11 percent of all married women 21 and under, while in the 1960s, they represented 26 percent of all married white women 21 and under. For African American women this number was higher in 1940, at 33 percent, and remained above the white level into the 1960s, at 40 percent (Cutright, 1972: 25). There appears to be some contradiction in the numbers. Some researchers, like Parnell, Swicegood, and Stevens, tend to speculate that the initial difference between marital rates between white and black women ( $\frac{2}{3}$  white women and  $\frac{1}{4}$  black women) are a result of a smaller selection of marriageable black men. Though others, like Cutright, seem to portray a proportionately higher expectation for marriage in communities that faced out-of-wedlock pregnancies at a greater rate. I believe Cutright's numbers allow us to see part of the source for these discrepancies: the sheer frequency with which women under the age of 21 were marrying in both the black and white communities. Before 1950, African American women were marrying at younger ages than white women. In 1940, black women on average married before the age of 22, which may account for their relatively higher percentage of African American pregnant brides at and under the age of 21, while white women were marrying around the age of 23. In 1950, the average for both African American and white women dropped to nearly 20 years of age. While in 1960, African American women's age at marriage rose to nearly 22, white women's was lower, 21 (Elliott, Krivickas, Brault, and Kreider, 2012: 20). This indicates that the sheer percentage difference between 1940 and 1960 from 11 to 26 percent would have been much more significant amongst the white population than the 7 percent climb amongst African American brides.

7 None of my interviewees were in this situation and the few leads I had on people who had had such an experience were unwilling to participate in my study. This might indicate that reliving what motivated a "shotgun marriage" or even the reactions of one's family, peers, and community to an unplanned pregnancy have had lasting effects on the people who went this route.

8 This can be seen as an elaboration of the concept of "companionate marriage" or "companionate love" that emerged in the 1920s when the family was undergoing a sort of democratization with the falling away of Victorian values, and the husband and wife

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were meant to open themselves up to one another and evolve as a couple, particularly in terms of intimacy. "Companionate marriage" stressed the importance of sexual relations within the couple and shared sexual pleasure. The fact that May sees the 1950s couple as continuing in this vein, in what is termed "an eroticized marriage," indicates that this had become an integral part of married life.

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